

VZCZCXRO3144  
RR RUEHAST RUEHDH RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB RUEHPOD RUEHSL  
RUEHTM RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHGZ #0592/01 2920659  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 190659Z OCT 09  
FM AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0991  
INFO RUEHGZ/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE 0289  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0777  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0223  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0233  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0224  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0293  
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 0211  
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE 0026  
RHMFIUU/HQ EPA WASHINGTON DC 0036  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0272  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC 0268  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J2/J3/J5// 0024

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GUANGZHOU 000592

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM, DRL AND OES/PCI  
EPA FOR OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV PHUM ECON PGOV CH](#)

SUBJECT: Fujian Wastewater Treatment Plant Update: Officials Claim  
Peaceful Resolution, but Access Denied

REF A: GUANGZHOU 553 AND PREVIOUS

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distribution. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Despite official claims that a standoff at a  
villager-occupied wastewater treatment plant in Fujian Province had  
been resolved peacefully, local Party and government officials  
prevented travel to the site or contact with the villagers in  
mid-October by Post personnel. End summary.

Officials Claim "Peaceful Resolution"

¶2. (SBU) Quangang District Party Standing Committee member and  
Information Director Mr. Lin and Quanzhou Foreign Affairs Office  
(FAO) Deputy Director Mr. Huang briefed ConGenoff in Xiamen October  
15 to provide an official update on the situation in Fengwei  
township, where a nearby suspect wastewater treatment plant was  
occupied by villagers August 26 (reftel). Lin and Huang said that,  
following a meeting between villager representatives and Quanzhou's  
acting mayor on September 28, during which the acting mayor publicly  
apologized for the government's handling of the pollution problem  
and pledged that the wastewater plant's operations would be brought  
into conformity with national standards, the mood within the village  
shifted markedly in support of working with the local government to  
find a peaceful resolution of the issue.

¶3. (SBU) At the same September meeting, the acting mayor also told  
the village representatives that because it was imperative that the  
plant return to operation, authorities would give the villagers  
until October 5 to relinquish control of the facility, according to  
Lin. Lin said that although "99%" of the villagers favored  
surrendering control of the plant, a very small group of "holdouts"  
remained past the deadline and refused to leave the plant. Lin said  
the situation was finally resolved "peacefully and without incident"  
October 13, when plant workers and Environmental Protection Bureau  
officials were able to enter and retake control of the facility.

¶4. (SBU) When asked if any of the villagers had been detained in

connection with the wastewater plant protest, Lin said that "fewer than 10 people" had been detained and were currently under investigation. Lin and Huang emphatically claimed that the situation had been successfully resolved because local officials exercised patience and restraint, listened to villager concerns and implemented confidence-building measures following the first, failed attempt to retake control through the use of police force.

#### Actions Belie Official Claims of Open Access

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15. (SBU) When asked if there were currently any constraints on travel to or from the village or on villager contacts with media or others outside the village, the officials said there were "no constraints," as the situation had "returned to normal." Moreover, according to Lin and Huang, the vast majority of the villagers were supportive of the manner in which the issue was resolved.

16. (SBU) After subsequent failed attempts to phone contacts in the village to corroborate the official statements, ConGenoff determined to take advantage of the officials' earlier claims of free access to the village by making an unannounced evening visit. Although this decision was made late in the day -- and closely held -- authorities clearly anticipated the visit.

17. (SBU) Upon exiting the expressway, but still a number of miles from Quangang, a plainclothes officer at a police checkpoint asked the driver, "Is there a diplomat in the car?" The officer then asked if the Quanzhou FAO had been informed of the travel. ConGenoff responded that he had met with the FAO earlier in the day and had been told there were no constraints on travel to the village. The officer then called FAO Deputy Director Huang. ConGenoff explained to Huang his interest in independently verifying the information received earlier in the day, noting that Huang and Lin had said there were no constraints on travel to the village.

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Huang remarked that he happened to be nearby, and that he would drive to the police checkpoint to discuss the situation.

18. (SBU) Huang subsequently summoned Lin, who expressed dismay that, after having provided such a detailed update, ConGenoff would desire to independently verify his report. Lin also expressed concern that ConGenoff would "misunderstand" the situation if he happened to talk to the "small minority" in the village that was discontented. Lin also noted that the "dissenters" might try to use the USG presence to re-galvanize the villagers' protest. ConGenOff reiterated post's interest in independently verifying the officials' information so as to be able to report on the situation with confidence, but desisted after it became clear that the officials did not plan to allow a visit to the village.

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